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JUSTICE FOR OTA, AFMLS, AND NDDS
TREASURY FOR FINCEN
DEA FOR OILS AND OFFICE OF DIVERSION CONTROL

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SUBJECT: HONDURAS INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY
REPORT (INCSR)

REF: STATE 209560

I. Summary

Efforts by the GOH have directly addressed the current drug trafficking routes including air, land, and maritime trans-shipments of cocaine through Honduras. Seizures have been reduced and are at lower quantities due to more enforcement of maritime and other drug trafficking movements by combined interdiction efforts as carried out by USG with Honduran police and military CN units. Arrests and seizures in neighboring countries have increased due to the pursuit of GOH CN forces aggressively enforcing counter drug initiatives within its borders. Corruption efforts have been addressed by the new Honduran Attorney General by implementation of polygraph testing for Specialized Investigative Units within the Public Ministry. These new measures are aimed at reducing allegations of internal corruption within the criminal justice sectors. The USG is also providing support to the new Money Laundering Unit created under the GOH Banking Commission. Such efforts include providing English language courses to help in the exchange of relevant information on an international basis with cooperating countries in the pursuit of Money Laundering investigations. Criminal Investigative training to this Unit is also being provided by the U.S. Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) in an effort to prepare stronger cases for successful prosecutions. Funding has remained dismal for the continued support of the various GOH counter drug entities and law enforcement efforts have been hindered by this continuing situation. Goals and objectives in counter narcotics planning have not been accomplished as a direct result of the lack of logistical support by the host country. Aggressive prosecution of major drug cases remains by the Public Ministry remaining weak due to the lack of training and support by the GOH. In spite of active and effective drug interdiction efforts by the Honduran military and police entities, case loads continue to grow within the Public Ministry due to the lack of clear lines of communication as well as inadequate leadership by higher ups within the judiciary system. Seized assets worth millions of dollars in cash and physical properties still continue to go unused by the GOH for several years now, due in part to non-aggressive and inactive participation by the Public Ministry Seized Assets Unit. The U.S. Mission in Honduras continues to provide technical support in an effort to expedite the application and use of asset seizures.

II. Status of Country

Honduras continues to be a transit country for drug trafficking and is still not considered a major drug producer. The transshipment of drugs thru the country via the usual air, land, and sea routes are actively monitored by combined USG and Honduran counter narcotics police and military units. Money Laundering training and support by USG agencies have been augmented in efforts to increase investigations as well as to prepare better and more solid cases for prosecution. NAS supports DEA efforts in Honduras and, in particular, the counter narcotics Special Vetted Unit. This unit has been responsible for the gathering of sensitive narcotics intelligence, under the direction of DEA, which has been instrumental in the disbanding of major international organized drug rings and the arrest of high profile drug dealers. Honduras is a party to the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic In Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. (1988 UN drug convention).

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2005 Policy Initiatives

Presidential elections took place in Honduras during the month of November 2005 and the new government has vowed even stronger efforts against crime and the fight against drugs. Stronger international cooperation along with increasing the numbers of the National Police are also commitments that will hopefully be seen as very positive concern on the part of the new president-elect of Honduras. Drug interdiction operations will be

strengthened along the north coast , along with more concentrated enforcement in other areas of the country. The Direccion de Lucha Contra Narcotrafico (DLCN) Unit, which operates under the Public Ministry as a special counter narcotics entity, has also committed itself to participate in the joint USG and Honduran initiatives in combating drug trafficking. The DLCN has also requested that they become fully vetted, to include polygraph testing, by the USG in a strong showing as to how serious they are about becoming part of the drug fighting solution in Honduras. The GOH Military Special Counter-narcotics Forces have also expressed a strong interest in becoming more directly involved in efforts to stem the drug trade and have also recently requested that they too be fully vetted. The Frontier Police Special Investigative Unit has been working closely with the Public Ministry Organized Crime Unit in drug investigations which have led to arrests with substantial seizures primarily along the north coast. They are also in the process of investigating Money Laundering with logistical assistance from the USG. Earlier this year, the Frontier Police uncovered some sensitive information which led to the Organized Crime Unit filing charges of document forgery and theft of official GOH passports from within the Immigration & Customs Office in Honduras. The Public Ministry to date has failed to take the proper actions to arrest or incarcerate government officials charged with these crimes.

Accomplishments. The U.S. DEA, in close cooperation with the Honduran Special Counter Narcotics Vetted Unit, the Frontier Police, and the Public Ministry, have been successful in the disruption of international drug trade with the seizure and arrest of high ranking organized crime figures. Accomplishments in 2005 include the first bilateral court-authorized telephone intercept drug investigation in Central America, thereby dismantling entrenched drug trafficking international organizations. Since 2003, seizures include eight thousand six hundred sixty one kilos of cocaine, 2.50 kilos of heroin, over six hundred pounds of marijuana, and 1,250 rocks of crack cocaine. These seizures are combined land, sea, and air interdictions. Some of these drug confiscations are believed to be directly connected to illegal Money Laundering activities originating in Colombia, Costa Rico, Panama, and Nicaragua. The amount of \$460,000 was also seized from a sea-going vessel off the coast of Honduras.

Law Enforcement Efforts. The USG continues to support and work closely with Honduran Military and Law Enforcement Counter Narcotics entities in investigations and operations against drug trafficking. Due to lack of funding and resources, Honduran anti-drug agencies charged with the investigations and prosecution of drug cases continues to be largely ineffective within the Public Ministry. Increase in arrests related to drug activities continue to rise with efforts by the Frontier Police and the Military as a result of interdiction operations.

Corruption. The USG is strongly supporting anti-corruption concerns within the Ministry of Public Security and the Public Ministry by providing support funding and logistical support, in particular, to the newly-formed Internal Affairs Office within the National Police. Recently a U.S. consultant was brought in to assess and evaluate the current Internal Affairs operating procedures, legal authorization as per Honduran laws, training needs, and operational capabilities. The U.S. Customs & Border Protection Special Tactics Unit (BORTAC) also provided firearms and tactical training to the Internal Affairs investigators charged with the arrest and detention of corrupt officers. Cases investigated and turned over for Administrative and Legal actions against officers charged with alleged misconduct and illegal activities continues to grow. Entire Special Operations Units with the National Police and the Public Ministry, which deal directly with U.S. Embassy agencies, have been submitted to polygraph testing and fully vetted to increase security and confidentiality in the handling of sensitive information. Several GOH officials have been charged in corrupt practices and are awaiting prosecution.

Agreement and Treaties. The border container security efforts have been beefed up and agreements within GOH Ministries dealing with these efforts have been signed to expand the internal country authority to open and inspect sealed containers should probable cause be established. Countries such as the U.S., Belize, Colombia, Jamaica, Mexico, Venezuela, and Spain have all signed counter-narcotics agreements with the country of Honduras. Included is the aforementioned Declaration of Principal to be signed between the U.S. and Honduras as part of the Container Security Initiative (CSI) for the inspection of sea-going cargo destined to the U.S. and other countries.

Cultivation/Production. Small amounts of cannabis plants

have been discovered around the Copan areas in Honduras, but they are still not being considered as a major drug cultivation of illegal substances by either USG agencies or the GOH counter narcotics forces.

Drug Flow/Transit. It is widely believed that the flow of drugs through Honduras continues to increase. The USG, in conjunction with GOH maritime interdiction efforts, has been successful in recent apprehensions and arrests of persons and ships involved in drug trafficking. Several ships have been detained and de-commissioned as a direct result of these operations, with considerable amounts of illegal drugs captured along the northern coast of Honduras. Gang members are being utilized by organized crime rings to guard drug shipments in exchange for drugs and weapons. Several major loads of weapons for drugs shipments have been intercepted in combined operations conducted by the GOH Ministry of Public Security and the Public Ministry Organized Crime Unit. It has been established that these transactions were being conducted between Honduran gun runners and Colombian drug dealers. In efforts to directly address port security, the Declaration of Principal Agreement (DOP) between the USG and Government of Honduras will be signed on December 15, 2005. This will initiate the Container Security Initiative (CSI) as shared by the U.S. Customs & Border Protection with participating countries, as a major deterrent to target ocean-going, containerized cargo destined to their countries. CSI is a deterrent to terrorist organizations that may seek to target sea-going trade in any country. This initiative provides a significant measure of security for the participating ports as well as the United States against weapons and illicit drug trade.

Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction. Lack of economic development, poverty, and unemployment continue to be viewed as major contributing factors to drug usage, especially among the youth of Honduras. A growing concern is the increased drug trafficking and use by gang members which target young school children in efforts to recruit them. These problems have been recognized by the present Honduran Administration, which is conscious that drug trafficking and usage pose security threats as well as social problems within the country. Programs have been initiated to deal with these problems to include the cooperation of numerous church and NGO groups dealing with proactive drug awareness and rehabilitation programs. Job skills, family counseling, Demand Reduction, and proactive projects are also included in these efforts to assist in counter drug activities. The USG sponsors an umbrella NGO project, known as the Institute for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (IHADFA) and Ministries of Public Health (CIHSA), which provides assistance to approximately seventy such groups that deal directly with public assistance in all of these efforts.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

Policy Initiatives. In spite of continued lack of basic resources, Honduras has pledged to increase its counter narcotics initiatives. These initiatives include the expansion of maritime interdiction, especially along the north coast where most of the drug trafficking occurs. The new GOH administration has made combating drug activities one of its major priorities. The government plans to strengthen international cooperation to confront these illegal activities.

Bilateral Cooperation. The U.S. has continued to increase financial assistance by amending existing Letters of Agreement with the Government of Honduras. In 2005, as part of the already donated funding amounts of over \$1.9 million dollars since 2003, the amount of \$79,0648.00, was donated to the Frontier Police and Combined Counter Narcotics Operations Units. Additional training, such as Basic and Advanced Criminal Investigative, Money Laundering, Drug Handling & Identification, and Questionable Documents courses have been added to existing assistance programs for both the Ministry of Public Security and Public Ministry offices.

The Road Ahead. Stronger law enforcement and judicial efforts, in spite of the lack of GOH resources to support these entities, are expected to result in continued international cooperation in the battle against international drug trafficking. Trafficking in Persons, commercial exploitation of women and children, organized crime and corruption are other important issues that must be dealt with by the GOH to improve the quality of life for its citizens. There exists within the Government of Honduras a strong political will to effectively deal with these and other internal matters.